

Message Text

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11

ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 SAB-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-20

ACDA-19 EUR-25 AF-10 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 DRC-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 DPW-01

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P R 131823Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1506

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0872

BEIRUT PASS DAMASCUS

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, IS, SY

SUBJECT: ISRAELI-SYRIAN ARTILLERY CLASHES ON GOLAN HEIGHTS

REF: TEL AVIV 0810

1. SUMMARY. EBAN TOLD ME FEB 12 THAT ALTHOUGH CURRENT SYRIAN MILITARY ESCALATION IF UNCHECKED MIGHT RISK HOSTILITIES, ISRAELIS DID NOT BELIEVE SYRIANS WANTED MAJOR ESCALATION. ISRAELIS WERE PLANNING NO DRASTIC COUNTERACTION, AS THEY CONSIDERED SYRIAN MOTIVATION TO BE POLITICAL AND
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AIMED AT ARRANGEMENT FOR SOME ISRAELI TROOP WITHDRAWAL,

WHICH SYRIANS BADLY WANTED. ISRAELIS REMAINED HOPEFUL THAT CURRENT EFFORTS TO GET DISENGAGEMENT TALKS WITH SYRIA STARTED WOULD SUCCEED. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING FEB 12 LUNCH I ASKED FONMIN EBAN I HOPED CURRENT SYRIAN MILITARY DID NOT REPEAT NOT CARRY RISK OF RENEWAL OF HOSTILITIES. EBAN REPLIED THAT IF IT CONTINUED, ONE WOULD HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THIS POSSIBILITY. SO FAR, ISRAEL'S REACTIONS HAD BEEN RESTRAINED. MOREOVER, THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF CHANGING ISRAELI POSTURE ON MATTER AT FEB 11 CABINET MEETING. I THEN NOTED ISRAELI PRESS ITEM SUGGESTING IDF MIGHT SHELL DAMASCUS AIRFIELD (REFTEL). EBAN SAID IDF HAD OPTIONS, INCLUDING THIS ONE, BUT TROUBLE WAS THEY WERE ALL TOO DRASTIC. SYRIANS WERE SO VULNERABLE. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS TRUE THAT IN SYRIA NOTHING OF MILITARY NATURE COULD HAPPEN WITHOUT GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, AND SYRIA THUS WAS WITTINGLY COURTING TROUBLE.

3. EBAN CONTINUED THAT IN LATEST INSTANCE SYRIA HAD DELIBERATELY BOMBARDED ISRAELI CIVILIAN SETTLEMENTS. THIS HAD LED TO SOME DISCUSSIONS IN KNESSET. GOI WANTED USG TO APPRECIATE HOW RESTRAINED ISRAELIS HAD BEEN. EBAN SAID HE AT SAME TIME COULD PROVIDE NO COMMITMENT AS TO HOW MUCH HARRASSMENT FROM SYRIANS ISRAEL COULD PUT UP WITH.

4. I ASKED EBAN WHAT HE THOUGHT SYRIAN MOTIVES WERE. EBAN REPLIED SYRIANS WERE FRUSTRATED: THEY SAW EGYPT AND JORDAN "WERE ALL RIGHT," AND YET THEIR OWN SITUATION "LOOKED BAD." EBAN BELIEVED SYRIANS STRONGLY DESIRED SOME ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND FELT THAT TO GET IT, THEY HAD TO MAKE SITUATION SEEM INTOLERABLE TO ISRAELIS AND ALARM INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. BUT ISRAELI MILITARY EXPERTS DID NOT THINK SYRIANS WANTED A MAJOR MILITARY ESCALATION, AND THERE WERE NO PENDING PROPOSALS FOR DRASTIC ISRAELI ACTION.

5. EBAN THOUGHT SYRIAN FRUSTRATION HAD BEEN COMPOUNDED BY SIGHT OF ISRAEL BEING ABLE TO BEGIN TO DEMOBILIZE ITS FORCES -- WHICH WAS TERMENDOUS RELIEF FOR ISRAEL. IN ANY CASE, SYRIAN MOTIVATION WAS POLITICAL, AND THEREFORE ISRAELI REACTION WAS RESTRAINED. EBAN SAID ISRAELIS REMAINED HOPEFUL THAT
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CURRENT EFFORTS TO GET SYRIA TO COME TO NEGOTIATING TABLE AS WELL AS PITCHES BEING MADE TO DAMASCUS TO MOVE ON POW ISSUE (HE MENTIONED FRENCH AND SOVIETS FAVORABLY IN THIS REGARD) WOULD SUCCEED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TREATY VIOLATION, ARTILLERY, COMBAT OPERATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TELAV00872
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740234/aaaabgbe.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: TEL AVIV 0810
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 JUN 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <13 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ISRAELI-SYRIAN ARTILLERY CLASHES ON GOLAN HEIGHTS
TAGS: MOPS, IS, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005